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What is claimed is:

- 5 1. An assay for assessing the risk for developing or having substance dependency comprising screening means for screening samples for the OPRM1 +118A allele, the presence of the allele indicating a risk of developing substance dependency.
- 10 2. The assay of claim 1, wherein screening means is genotyping means.
 - 3. The assay of claim 2, wherein said screening means is phenotyping means.
 - 4. The assay of claim 2, wherein samples include tissues sample including peripheral blood.
 - 5. The assay of claim 1, wherein substance is alcohol.
 - 6. The assay of claim 1 wherein substance is nicotine.
 - 7. The assay of claim 1 wherein substance is cocaine.
 - 8. The assay of claim 1 wherein substance is marijuana.
- 9. A method for estimating substance dependency comprising screening samples for the OPRM1 +118A allele, the presence of the allele indicating an increased risk for substance dependence.
 - 10. The method of claim 9, wherein screening step includes genotyping using +118A/G OPRM1 restriction fragment length polymorphism.
 - 11. The method of claim 10, wherein said screening step includes screening

tissue samples.

- 12. The method of claim10, wherein said screening step includes screening peripheral blood.
- 13. The method of claim 9, wherein said screening step screens for diagnosing a substance dependency wherein the substance is alcohol.
- 14. The method of claim 9, wherein said screening step screens for diagnosing a substance dependency wherein the substance is nicotine.
 - 15. The method of claim 9, wherein said screening step screens for diagnosing a substance dependency wherein the substance is cocaine.
 - 16. The method of claim 9, wherein said screening step screens for diagnosing a substance dependency wherein the substance is marijuana.
 - 17. A marker for determining the risk of developing substance dependency comprising the OPRM1 +118A allele indicating the risk for developing substance dependency.
 - 18. The marker of claim 17, wherein the substance is alcohol.
 - 19. The marker of claim 17, wherein the substance is cocaine.
 - 20. The marker of claim 17, wherein the substance is marijuana.

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